

## **PBS access to two vital MS treatments under threat as Government decision looms**

Multiple disease-modifying therapies (DMTs), Ocrevus (ocrelizumab) and Kesimpta (ofatumumab), are at risk of being withdrawn from the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS), as a consequence of government-driven policy-related price reductions.

The two drugs are both high-efficacy multiple sclerosis (MS) therapies (a subset of PBS-listed MS therapies in Australia) that are used first-line for many Australian patients as some of the most effective in preventing disability progression in long-term real-world observational studies, especially when commenced early in the disease process.

MS is a heterogeneous disease, both in its biology and in its clinical course and as such, no single therapy will be optimal for every individual, nor remain effective across all stages of their disease.

MS Australia Acting CEO Dr Julia Morahan says it is therefore essential that clinicians and people with MS have access to a broad range of DMTs, allowing treatment to be tailored and adapted over time to achieve the best possible outcomes.

“It is not MS Australia's wish nor our place to be involved in industry negotiations regarding drug pricing.

“Our focus is however, in advocating strongly for continued access to life-changing, high-efficacy medications on the PBS,” Dr Julia Morahan said.

The availability of PBS listed treatments for MS has enabled people with MS to live longer and healthier lives, while also helping to reduce the burden on Australia's healthcare system - including the impact on the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

Health economic studies, including, most recently, the Multiple Sclerosis Prevalence and Health Economic Impact in Australia 2025 report, demonstrate the benefit of these medications in reducing costs for governments, not only in lowering healthcare costs but also by keeping people socially engaged and in the workforce. For individuals, their health and quality of life can be significantly improved when on effective DMTs.

Hobart General Counsel, Sharlene Brown, was diagnosed with MS 24 years ago and has been successfully treated with Ocrevus for more than seven years.

Ms Brown, who also serves as an Independent Director of MS Australia, Chairs the MS Australia National Advocacy Committee, and is also a Committee Member of the MS International Federation (UK), has described any proposal to remove Ocrevus and Kesimpta from the PBS as both deeply concerning and profoundly unfair.

“As someone living with MS, and as someone who advocates every day for Australians affected by this disease, I find it incredibly difficult to understand how the Government could contemplate restricting access to medications that have transformed lives and delivered proven outcomes for so many people.

“These treatments are not a luxury. They are the reason thousands of Australians are able to remain in the workforce, care for their families, contribute to their communities and maintain their independence,” Ms Brown said

Ms Brown says removing access to Ocrevus and Kesimpta undermines confidence in the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, disregards the clinical evidence, and risks reversing years of progress in MS care.

“From both a personal and professional perspective, this is a decision that appears short-sighted, inconsistent with the science, and disconnected from the real-world impact it will have on Australians living with MS.

“People with MS already live with enough uncertainty. They should not be forced to worry about whether access to the medication keeping their disease stable will be taken away.”

MS Australia supports affordable access to all proven treatment options to increase the opportunity for people with MS to access effective therapy.

The two medications in question cover almost half of the treated MS population

Dr Morahan agrees that if MS treatments are removed from the PBS, it will have devastating consequences for our community.

“If this Government decision goes ahead, people with MS will be limited in the choice of available treatments they can access affordably through the PBS.

“We urge the government to work with the relevant stakeholders and the MS community to ensure continued access to high-efficacy MS medications on the PBS,” Dr Morahan said.

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**About MS Australia**

MS Australia is Australia’s national multiple sclerosis not-for-profit organisation that empowers researchers, advocates for change and acts as the national voice for people living with MS. Through research investment, evidence-based advocacy and national collaboration, MS Australia works to improve outcomes and help accelerate progress toward better treatments, prevention and ultimately a cure for MS.

For more information, visit [www.msaustralia.org.au](http://www.msaustralia.org.au)